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# Negotiating difference in political contexts: An exploration of Hansard

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## Abstract

This paper explores the language of MPs and Peers, when negotiating their *differences* in times past. Specifically, I draw upon Historic Hansard data (1803-2005) representative of the two Houses (Commons and Lords), paying particular attention to exchanges involving expressive politeness features (deferential terms, polite preludes, etc.). I demonstrate how such features enabled parliamentarians to “do” deference and respect, but sometimes at a surface level only. For example, utterances containing expressive politeness features functioned as implicit accusations relating to another’s inaccurate or misguided views on a particular issue and/or as a means of claiming a conflicting position. I suggest that, because such behaviour was (and remains) institutionally sanctioned and deliberately ritualistic, it did not then nor does not now constitute systematic impoliteness, in the main (cf. Harris 2001). Rather, we witness a range of facework behaviour in parliamentary debates: from face enhancement to face aggravation, and everything between (Archer, 2015).

Keywords: difference, expressive politeness features, negotiation, politics, (re)framing

## 1. Introduction

Contemporary political discourse has been identified as a site where debates tend to be framed around issues of truth (Hodges 2008: 1), albeit “truths” that represent a shared belief about – as opposed to knowledge that corresponds – to a state in the world (cf. van Dijk 2008). As part of such debates, political actors will often highlight “the ‘real’ truth” and/or “counter opponents’ truth claims” (Hodges 2008: 1) by assimilating and re-accentuating the prior discourse(s) of others (Bakhtin 1986: 89). This might relate to the *already uttered*, the *already known* and/or *common opinion* (Bakhtin 1981: 279).

This paper draws upon a 200-year subset of UK Parliamentary speeches, drawn from official Hansard records, in order to study the behaviour of political actors of times past. The speeches relate to both the Commons and the Lords, and are available via the SAMUELS’ Experimental CQPweb Interface: SECI (Hardie, 2012; Wattam et al, 2014).<sup>1</sup> Table 1, below, provides a breakdown of the number of speeches and total words for each subset, as well as their cumulative totals.<sup>2</sup>

Table 1: Breakdown of Hansard sub-sets

Hansard sub-set	Total no. of speeches	Total no. of words
Commons	6,257,721	1,263,023,403
Lords	1,287,381	424,631,234
Cumulative totals	7,545,102	1,687,654,637

<sup>1</sup> These subsets were incorporated into SECI as part of the cross-university, AHRC/ESRC funded SAMUELS project (grant reference AH/L010062/1).

<sup>2</sup> The complete Hansard archive contains approximately 5 billion words (Vice, p.c.).

Having such historical records in an electronic format means that we can use computers to find utterances like (1) and (3), via the conventional formula *noble friend*, and (2)-(4), via polite precludes such as *respectfully*, *with due respect* and *with great respect*:

- (1) I profoundly disagree with my noble friend's theory (S5LV0021P0\_02257, 18/5/1916)
- (2) I wish respectfully to tell them that they have not made up their minds on any single question material to the war: The public have been in advance of the Government on every single question (S5LV0021P0\_01683, 19/4/1916)
- (3) With due respect to my noble friend, he is not quite correct (S5LV0395P0\_02576, 25/7/1978)
- (4) If I may be allowed to say so with great respect to the gentleman who is to be, as I understand, the new Minister, the Minister of Reconstruction is going to be a glorified Under-Secretary of the Prime Minister (S5LV0026P0\_00787, 8/8/1917)

Because they are encoded in speech, these kinds of expressive politeness features (Eelen 2001) can be searched for relatively easily via SECI's word look-up function (in conjunction with wild card searches such as *with \* respect* and *respect\**, for example). SECI also provides details of a term's frequency via its frequency lists function, a term's context of use via KWIC concordance lines, and a term's distribution over time via its *distribution* function. By drawing upon such techniques, we can begin to better document the extent to which - as well as the ways in which and reasons that - MPs and Peers used modes of address, and other deferential terms when debating in the two Houses. Deferential terms and modes of address are regularly referred to as politeness markers in the extant literature, for example. However, I will show that their highly ritualised use in this context (past and present) is best understood to be part-shaped by Hansard reporting, and part-triggered by activity type (Levinson 1992) norms and ways of manipulating such norms without falling into impoliteness and/or without necessarily engaging in face enhancement (Archer 2015; Archer and Malory 2017). Note that (1)-(3) contain implicit accusations relating to the interlocutors' inaccurate or misguided views on a particular issue, for instance, and (4) contains an implicit criticism of the Minister who was to become no more than a *glorified Under-Secretary*. In all cases, then, the Peers were engaging in various levels of face damage, but *varnishing their* face threatening acts (FTAs) with a surface layer of linguistic politeness (Johnson and Clifford 2011). In (1)-(3), in addition, we have evidence of the Peers assimilating as a means of re-accentuating the prior discourse(s) of their targets (Bakhtin 1986: 89), via terms such as *theory*, *not made up their minds* and *not quite correct*.

As this study constitutes a diachronic exploration of the MPs' and Peers' need to use ritualized discourse when negotiating their differences, I first explain the usefulness of the Hansard records when it comes to studying discursive phenomena (Section 2), before moving on to explore a number of deference markers and modes of address using the techniques outlined above (Sections 3-3.2.3). Given the apparent interplay between face enhancement and face aggravation in this context (sometimes simultaneously), face and facework will be discussed throughout the paper. *Face* is understood, here, to be a dynamically-negotiated image of self that, because it is shaped by interlocutors, can be withdrawn as readily as it is given, following Goffman (1967: 5, 10, 14). *Facework* is understood to be the "actions taken by a person to make what [s/he] is doing consistent with face" (Goffman 1967: 5). As Archer (2015) notes, this can be with the aim of achieving face enhancement, face threat, both (i.e., face

enhancement and face threat) or even be (deliberately) ambiguous as to its face-enhancing or face-damaging intent.

## 2. Linguistic studies which have drawn upon Hansard to study discursive phenomena

The Hansard records are not – nor should be considered to be – verbatim transcripts. Indeed, repetitions, redundancies and obvious mistakes (including grammatical mistakes) are regularly omitted from them (Jack et al. 2011). There are also highly regulated ways of referring to Members, and a policy that Hansard recorders should correct incorrect references, unless the latter is commented upon (see Sections 3.2 and 4). Such transcripts provide a useful means of investigating discursive phenomena from times past, nonetheless. For example, Harris (2001) has explored the discourse of Prime Minister’s Question Time (March to November 2000) to determine how much (im)politeness was exhibited during such sessions. She reports that impoliteness was systematic to the extent of being sanctioned (in this admittedly short period). It was also found to bring its own rewards, as long as it did not equate to “unparliamentary language” use (see <http://www.parliament.uk>). Archer and Malory (2017) have since explored Parliament’s admission that MPs regularly demonstrate considerable ingenuity when circumventing the “unparliamentary language” prohibition, drawing upon the same subsets as this paper. They consider examples such as (5):

- (5) Genghis Khan was probably sophisticated, but I do not believe that we would want him for an ally: The Foreign Secretary and his colleagues should consider carefully before they appease the United States Administration under President Bush: I am against that because, as Nelson Mandela said, that Government are as dangerous as any other Administration in the world: The sooner the decent people of America, of whom there are so many, are able to elect a President who is not a “moron”; as one Canadian Minister has called Bush; who knows where Iraq is, and who has some ideas behind him, the better it will be for all (S5CV0395P1, 25/11/2002).

In 2002, derogative terms like *moron* were still prohibited by parliamentary rules.<sup>3</sup> The MP, in this case, would thus have needed to maintain a level of plausible deniability. This explains why the assessment of Bush, as well as the assessment of the US Government as “as dangerous as any other Administration in the world”, are explicitly attributed to others (a *Canadian Minister* and *Nelson Mandela*). Politicians will sometimes “bring their discourse identities as political agents” (Fetzer and Bull, 2012: 128) to bear in this way in an attempt to shape a debate. The MP’s paralleling of Bush with the notorious Genghis Khan may have been an attempt to distance himself and/or his party from Bush’s policies in respect to Iraq, for example. It may have also served a cautioning function for the *Foreign Secretary and his colleagues* (respecting their alliance with such a President). This MP’s awareness of acting in front (as well as on behalf) of a multi-level audience (Ilie 2006) points to the close relationship between facework, self-presentation and impression management in this context. With this in mind, Archer (2017) considers MPs’ use of self-presentation and impression management strategies in examples such as (6), where the speaker (Lord Clement McNair) was bemoaning the plight of the UK electorate, because of having to vote *for the lesser of two evils*:

- (6) No one who has done any ordinary grass-roots canvassing, would deny that at least four out of every five votes are cast against something or somebody, rather than for anything: This is how we have to behave

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<sup>3</sup> Since the introduction of the 24<sup>th</sup> edition of *Erskine May: Parliamentary Practice*, “whether a word should be regarded as unparliamentary depends on the context in which it is used” (Jack et al. 2011: 445).

under an electoral system which was described yesterday by The Times as "a lethal gamble": This rough, oafish game depends essentially upon fear: You have to frighten people into believing that the other lot are going to be even worse than you have already shown yourselves to be, and in order to pull off this propaganda trick you need bugaboos or bogeymen: You need a name to make the flesh creep: The late and very much respected Aneurin Bevan served the party opposite in that capacity very well for some time (S5LV0417P0\_01590, 11/2/1981)

This *propaganda trick* is claimed to have worked, in part, because of *bugaboos or bogeymen* like *Aneurin Bevan*. As Archer (2017) notes, McNair's other-depiction, here, makes use of positive politeness (Brown and Levinson, 1987), for Bevan is depicted as *very much respected*, and as someone who had *served the party opposite...very well for some time*. However, the positive politeness was encased within, and thus nullified by, a much more deleterious depiction of the "monstrous" MP.

As highlighted in the Introduction, this paper shares Archer's interest in the apparent interplay between face enhancement and face aggravation in this context (sometimes simultaneously). Section 3-3.2.3 (following) will thus focus upon two linguistic features associated with expressive politeness, deference markers and modes of address, as a means of determining the extent to which they were used to "do" face enhancement, face attack, both face enhancement and face attack, or were (strategically) ambiguous in facework terms (Archer 2015).

### **3. Expressive politeness features**

As previously noted, expressive politeness equates to a type of "politeness [which is linguistically] encoded in speech" (Eelen 2001: 35). Linguistically signalled politeness is prevalent, in the British parliament. Reasons include Erskine May's dictums respecting "the characteristics of parliamentary practice" (i.e., "good temper and moderation"), and the need to immediately withdraw any "abusive or insulting language used in debate" (cited in <http://www.parliament.uk>) when engaging in this activity type (see also Jack et al. 2011). As will become clear, however, the presence of expressive politeness features does not always equate to the presence of genuine face enhancement.

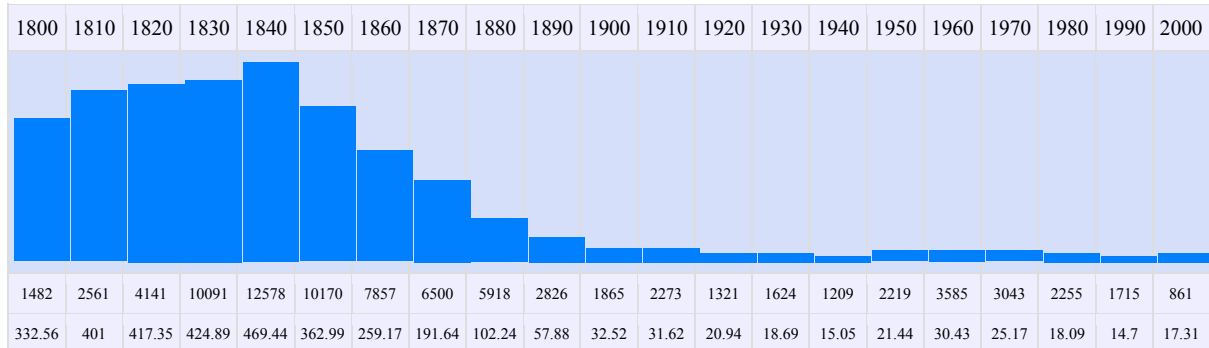
#### **3.1.1 *With ... respect***

The search string *with \* \* respect* identified 43,331 matches in the Hansard Lords subset of speeches, and 110,406 matches in the Hansard Commons subset of speeches. These figures equate to 102.04 instances per million words and 87.41 instances per million words respectively. The search string captured phrases, such as the following:

Table 2: Results for *with \*\* respect*

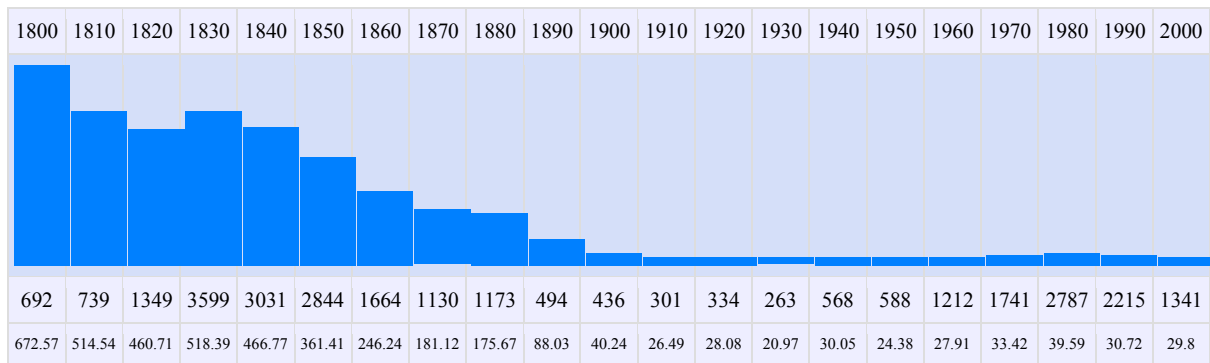
Expression used	Hansard Lords	(instances per mill words)	Hansard Commons	(instances per mill words)	Total (both Houses)
with respect	28,501	(67.12)	86,094	(68.17)	114,595
with great respect	5,871	(13.83)	8,010	(6.34)	13,881
with all respect	1,586	(3.74)	4,041	(3.18)	5,627
with the greatest respect	2,566	(6.04)	2,217	(1.76)	4,783
with all due respect	677	(1.59)	1,613	(1.28)	2,290
with due respect	692	(1.63)	864	(0.68)	1,556
with very great respect	249	(0.59)	628	(0.5)	877
with every respect	131	(0.31)	435	(0.34)	566
with the utmost respect	214	(0.5)	331	(0.26)	545
with deep respect	206	(0.49)	72	(0.06)	278
with all the respect	48	(0.11)	146	(0.12)	194
with proper respect	48	(0.11)	141	(0.11)	189
with the deepest respect	96	(0.23)	62	(0.05)	158
with the highest respect	37	(0.09)	78	(0.08)	115
with profound respect	44	(0.1)	67	(0.05)	111
with greater respect	27	(0.06)	55	(0.04)	82
with utmost respect	2	(0)	1	(0)	3

One thing to note in respect to Table 2 is that we are possibly capturing evidence of a reporter's style of editing as well as the words the Members actually used: not least because of the working practice of omitting adverbs (like *very*) unless they were repeated or emphasised in context (Vice, p.c.). There are interesting patterns to consider nonetheless. For example, the most frequent phrase, *with respect*, was particularly frequent in the Commons (with 86,094 instances), and was distributed across the decades as follows.



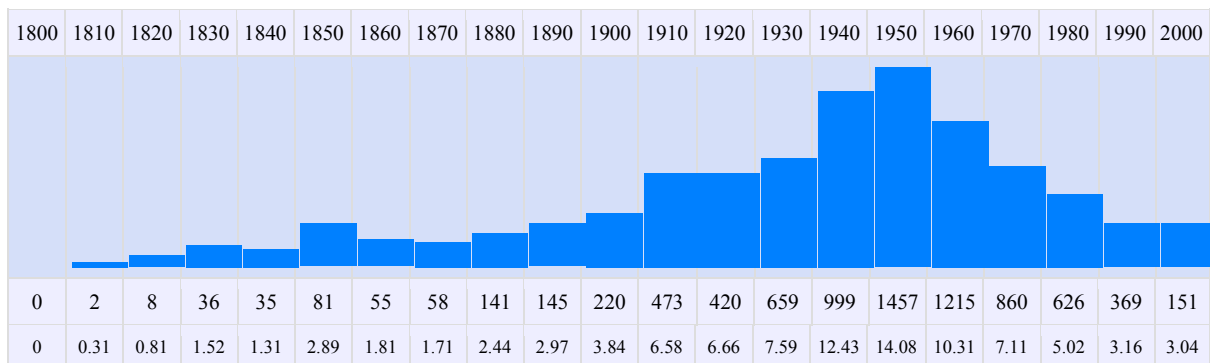
Graph 1: Frequency of *with respect* in the Commons (prioritised by instances per million words)

This and subsequent graphs have prioritised instances per million words. In this case, it allows us to see how – although *with respect* continues to be a feature of parliamentary talk – the phrase peaks in usage in the 1840s, before decreasing substantially. This pattern coincides with the ratification of the 1840 Parliament Papers Act, which resulted in Hansard records becoming immune to libel claims. As Graph 2 reveals, the pattern is similar in the Lords subset, except for the gradual decline happening earlier in the nineteenth century.

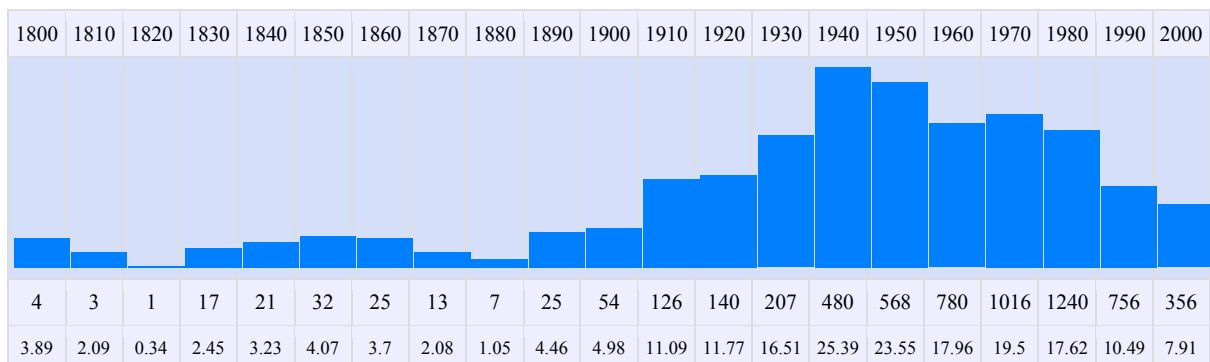


Graph 2: Frequency of *with respect* in the Lords (prioritised by instances per million words)

Similar to Culpeper’s (2011: 176) findings for the courtroom, the bulk of the *with respect* instances occurred in initial position, regardless of decade, and were followed by utterances that tended to be open “to impoliteness interpretation[s]” (or, at least, face threatening ones). Many of the instances of the second most frequent phrase, *with great respect*, also occurred in initial position. Their distribution over time demonstrates a slightly different pattern than *with respect*, however. The peak in usage occurs in the 1950s, in the Commons subset, and the 1940s, in the Lords subset, before showing a gradual decline over the last half-century (see Graphs 3 and 4). The increasing usage of *with great respect* happens, then, at the point when *with respect* is declining in usage (cf. Graphs 1 and 2, above, with Graphs 3 and 4 below), thereby pointing to a potential shift in speaker preference (and/or editorial preference) toward the boosted expression.



Graph 3: Frequency of *with great respect* in the Commons (prioritised by instances per million words)



Graph 4: Frequency of *with great respect* in the Lords (prioritised by instances per million words)

Interestingly, the peak in use in the Commons (in the 1950s) seems to be connected, in part, with World War II and its after-effects. Hence its frequent use in parliamentary debates relating to the army, aviation, court martial appeals, defence spending, diplomatic privilege, disability,

military equipment, national service, war materials, widows, etc. Many of the occurrences in this period align with the denotation espoused by dictionaries (regardless of topic): that *with...respect* is used by a speaker, when s/he is seeking to mitigate the effect of an expression of disagreement. In one instance, for example, an MP stated

- (7) With great respect to the Minister, I do not think it is good enough to wait for Sir Alan Budd's committee on gambling which is not due to report until next summer: There are rumours, after all, that Hill and Coral are due to float on the stock market and that Ladbrokes' betting operation could be floated off, too: It is reasonable to believe that one of the reasons for the changes is to see profit margins increase so that there can be big pay-offs when the companies are floated (S6CV0354P1\_01992, 25/1/2000)

Here, the deferential marker precedes a critical proposition, relating to Sir Budd's committee not reporting to Parliament quickly enough, thereby allowing gambling companies to make even greater profits during the interlude. Although *rumours* are representative of presumed common opinion rather than the *already known* (Bakhtin, 1981: 279), the term still re-animates the prior discourses of others (cf. Bakhtin, 1986: 89). Arguably, it is also meant to underline the speaker's sense of urgency. We thus have evidence of a similar pattern to that noted by Harris, in respect to the Prime Minister's Question Time data. Namely, that "attempt[s] to avoid impoliteness", using negative politeness features, "appear to coexist with the performance of...threats to the hearer's positive face" (Harris, 2001: 463). As much of the face damage was deliberate in Harris's dataset (see, e.g., Goffman's 1967: 14 notion of intentional face threats, which are spiteful), she concluded that Prime Minister's Question Time tends to be characterised by *systematic impoliteness* (at least during the period March to November 2000). The MP's facework intention toward *the Minister* is less clear, when it comes to Example (7) however. For he was complaining about (the potential consequences) of inactivity. We might thus want to see this as an example of strategically ambiguous facework (Archer 2015). This type of facework falls between:

- incidental facework, where face damage is understood to be a possible, albeit unplanned by-product of the interaction (Goffman, 1967: 14), and
- intentional facework, which is undertaken deliberately in order to cause face damage (or face enhancement).

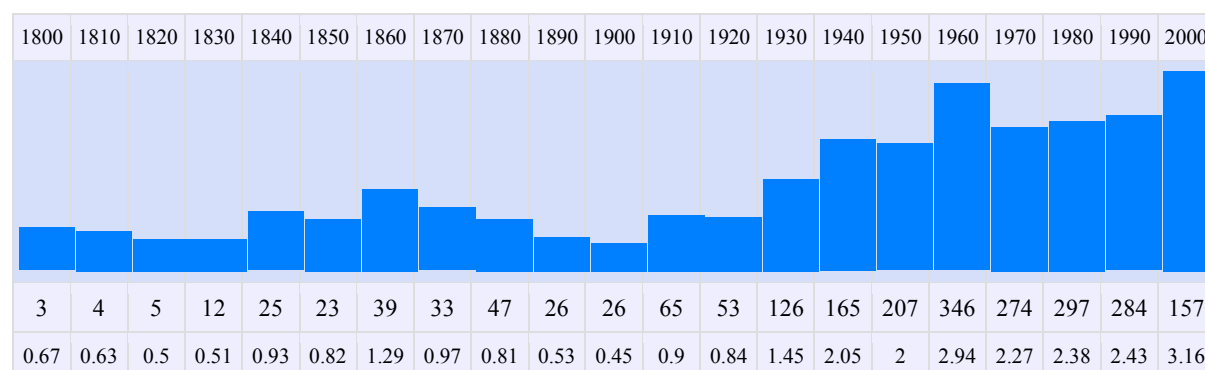
Example (8) provides us with a clear example of incidental facework:

- (8) With great respect to you, Sir Alan, with whom I am not prepared to disagree at this juncture: I simply say that the point about equity is the essence of the notion of hybridity: There are special procedures in the House to deal with those matters (S6CV0343P0\_20000125, 19/7/2000)

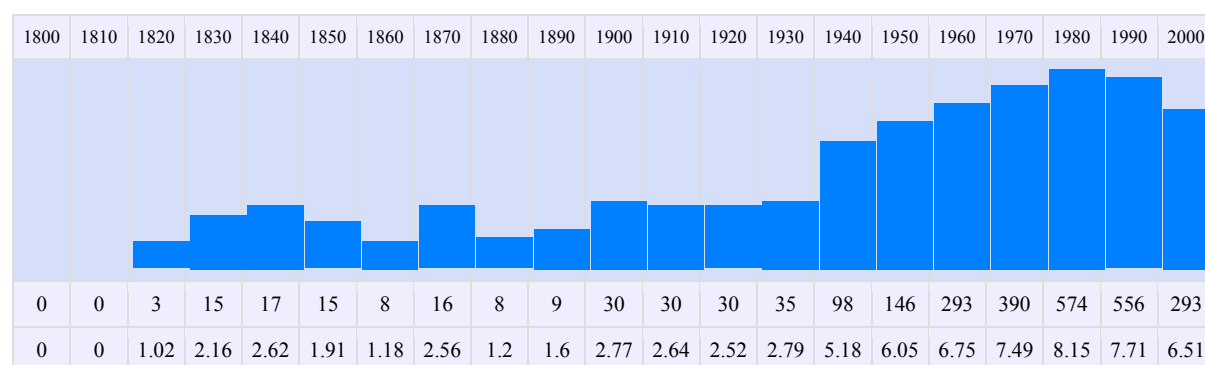
In this instance, the MP used *with great respect* as a prelude to a statement that made clear he was not prepared to disagree with another MP. The disinclination to overtly disagree is in line with Brown and Levinson's (1987:62) treatment of deference as displaying concern for the addressee's face (i.e., their want to be unimpeded). The speaker, in Example (8), also reworked Sir Alan's *point about equity* in order to make clear that *those matters* can be *dealt with* via *special procedures*. He therefore addressed Sir Alan's concern, but in a way that closed down any further discussion. Notice, in addition, that a second-person subject pronoun was used in (8), in preference to a more socially distant honorific (cf. *Minister* in (7)). *You* was a much less common form of address in our dataset: most likely because of the Parliamentary expectation that Members address each other by their position and in the third person (Chilton 2004: 105). There were still signs of negotiating difference, nonetheless. *At this juncture* suggests the speaker would be prepared to disagree with *Sir Alan* on another occasion, for example.



As Table 2 reveals, the adjectives modifying *respect* can take a comparative and superlative form. The most frequent of these, *with the greatest respect*, has the following distribution across the Commons subset (Graph 5) and Lords subset (Graph 6), thereby re-affirming the speaker's preference (and/or the editorial preference) toward the boosted form, as noted above (cf. Graphs 1 to 4).<sup>4</sup>



Graph 5: Frequency of *with the greatest respect* in the Commons (prioritised by instances per million words)



Graph 6: Frequency of *with the greatest respect* in the Lords (prioritised by instances per million words)

In this case, the two subsets demonstrate a similar pattern of increasing usage over time, with notable rises from the 1930s, in the case of the Commons, and from the 1940s, in the case of the Lords: but only until the 1980s in respect to the latter, after which the phrase seems to have begun a gradual decline. In terms of usage patterns, the phrase appears to (i) occur most frequently in medial position, and (ii) to display a strength of personal feeling, on the part of the speaker. Examples from the Commons include:

- (9) The whole point is whether the Committee considers it advisable and necessary that a man should be liable to criminal proceedings for a statement that he has knowingly made to prevent an applicant from obtaining relief, or whether hon: Members are satisfied that the civil remedy is sufficient in itself: In my view, with the greatest respect to those hon: Members who feel that it is, the civil remedy is very difficult to obtain, in spite of the generous assistance of the Law Society and of the Poor Persons' Committee in such cases (S5CV0286P0\_03208, 27/2/1934)
- (10) Unfortunately the practice in Ireland is not at all as well settled as the right hon: and learned Gentleman would have us believe, and, with the greatest respect, I venture to differ from him as to the law as it at present exists: I cannot accept it as he has laid it down (S3V0314P0\_03481, 10/5/1887)

<sup>4</sup> See Vice and Farrell (2017) for an account of how (and the conditions under which) Hansard recorders have created their reports during the period covered by this study.

Like Examples (9) and (10), many instances involving *with the greatest respect* also contained stance markers such as *in my view*, *in my opinion*, *in all honesty*, *unfortunately*, etc. The overt disagreement in (9) and (10) is also representative, as is the use of obligation modals (such as *must*) and mental state verbs (*believe*, *feel*, *know*, *seem*, *think*, *understand*), often in a negated form.

As Bakhtin (1986: 90-92) notes, a speaker signals his or her evaluative attitude toward an object of an utterance - and, sometimes, their attitude toward the other - by the way they re-accentuate another's words. Consider Example (11), where the words of an un-named other are introduced only to be framed by the speaker as *absurd* (thereby intensifying the potential face threat):

- (11) In the next two years, we will roughly have trebled the amount of aid going to Africa, despite our commitments in Iraq, by comparison with when we came to power in 1997: This Government and this country can be proud of the commitment that we have made to Africa, but I do not believe that the money that we spent in helping Iraq towards a stable and democratic future was wasted: It is important to do both; we are doing both: With the greatest respect, it is absurd to suggest that all the money is being wasted on gender advice: The money in our aid programme is going to help the poorest people in the world, and it is making a real difference (S6CV0415P1\_20031209, 9/12/2003)

Notice, how the MP also uses his turn as an opportunity to boast about the record of the current government, with the aim of accentuating its caring credentials. The use of positive politeness is then extended to the *country* more broadly, so that they, too, are able to soak in the reflective pride of *making a real difference*.

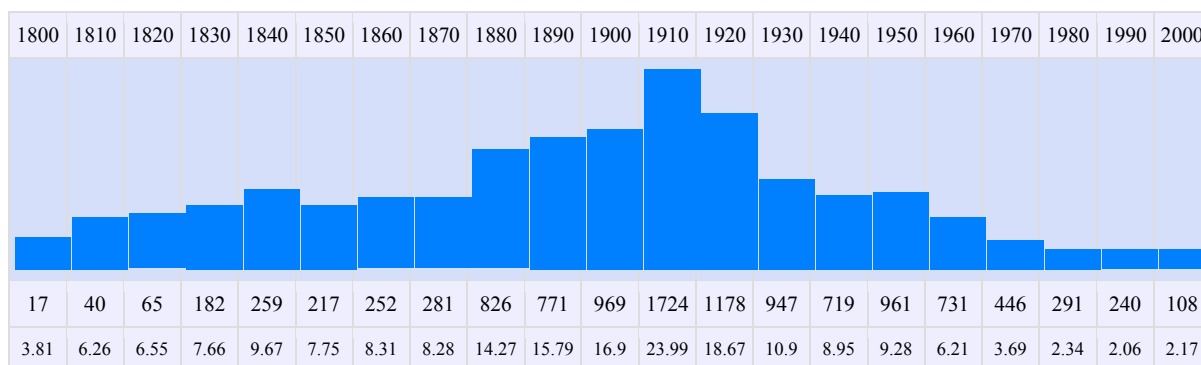
Ilie (2004: 62) discusses a rather different re-framing example involving the same deferential phrase. Opposition Leader, William Hague, directed a rhetorical question at Prime Minister Blair, which simultaneously insulted him and his Foreign Secretary: "Has he [Blair] been taking lessons in diplomacy from the Foreign Secretary". In response, Blair countered:

- (12) With the greatest respect to the right hon. Gentleman, I think that the one group of people we are not entitled to take any lessons from about Europe are the Conservatives (S6CV0311P0\_19980505, 5/5/198)

Blair's strategy effectively "redirect[ed] the audience's attention from [his] one-to-one dispute" with Hague "to the larger...confrontation between the two political parties" (Ilie, 20004: 62). By so doing, he was able to highlight that the Conservatives had nothing to offer, when it came to (understanding) Europe. Given Blair and Hague managed to stay within the confines of permitted parliamentary language use, there is an argument for labelling this strategic face aggravation (Archer 2015) as opposed to strategic impoliteness (Harris 2001).

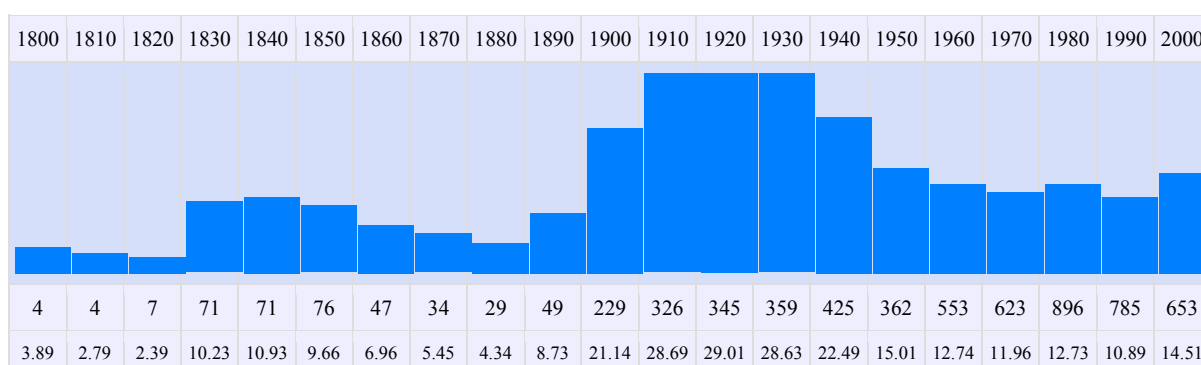
### 3.1.2 *Respectfully*

*Respectfully* occurs 11,224 times in the Commons subset (i.e., 8.89 instances per million words) and 5,948 in the Lords subset (i.e., 14.01 instances per million words). Graphs 7 and 8 show its distribution in the two Houses, over our 200-year period.



Graph 7: Frequency of *respectfully* in the Commons (prioritised by instances per million words)

As the graphs reveal, there is an overlap in respect to the decades where the term proves to be the most frequent: the 1890s to the 1920s. After this, we see a decline in usage – especially in the Commons.



Graph 8: Frequency of *respectfully* in the Lords (prioritised by instances per million words)

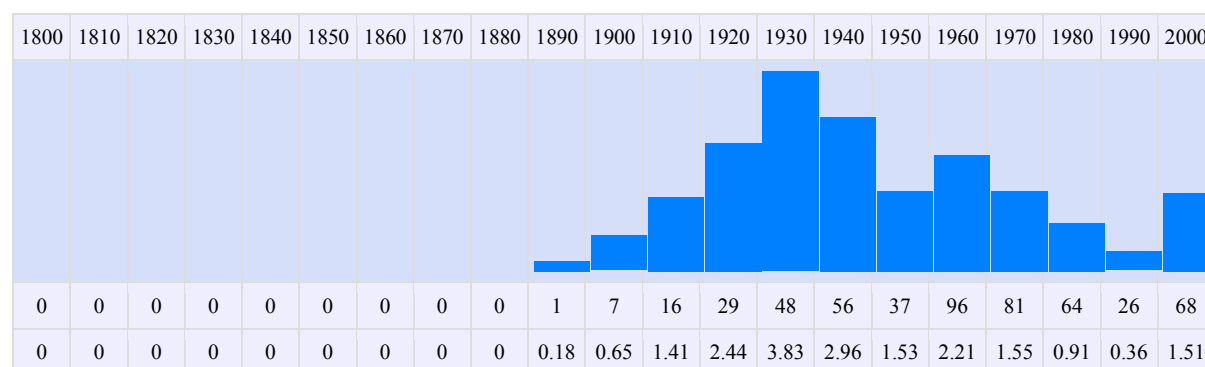
In the Commons subset, *respectfully* was used to seek permission to state something (e.g., *If I may say so respectfully ...*), to make a request (e.g., *The petitioners therefore respectfully request that the House of Commons note ...*), and to remind (e.g., *I respectfully remind him that at least two measures ...*), as well as to overtly disagree with another. Overt disagreements, involving the word *respectfully*, included the following:

- (13) The hon: Member for South Down (Mr: McGrady) said that the name of the RUC and our desire to retain that name was rather a tenuous link to our desire to mark the sacrifice, but I have to say to him that I do not believe that he is right: I must respectfully disagree with him: I quote to the hon: Gentleman and the House the words of ...Rosemary Graham, who is the widow of constable John Graham, murdered by the IRA in Lurgan, [she] said to Mr: Patten: The RUC must remain intact so that my husband John did not die in vain: My husband was a family man: He was not political, he was not sectarian (S6CV0347P0\_04258, 6/4/2000)

In this example, Mr McGrady's words are initially summarised so that they might be contradicted. The MP opts to do so both by *respectfully disagreeing with him*, and also by signalling a compulsion to speak out as a means of setting the record straight (*I have to say to him that I do not believe that he is right*). The MP then re-vocalises the words of the widow so that "she" tells us about what type of man her *murdered* husband was (*a family man* who was not *political* or *sectarian*). This enables the MP to emphasise that the desire to retain a name is not always driven by political motives (contra McGrady's reported claim).

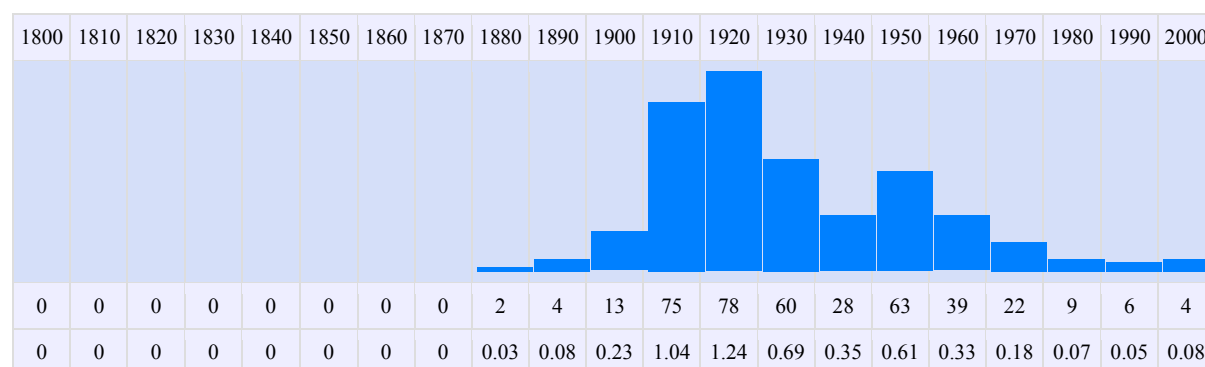
There was a weak correlation between *disagree* and *respectfully* in the Lords subset also (i.e., 104 co-occurrences). However, there was a stronger association between *respectfully* and *agree* (i.e., 423 co-occurrences), *respectfully* and *suggest* (1,237 co-occurrences) and *respectfully* and

*may* (1,243 co-occurrences). *If I may respectfully say so* was also relatively frequent in the Lords subset, with 529 occurrences, distributed across our 200-year period as follows:



Graph 9: Frequency of *If I may respectfully say so* in the Lords (prioritised by instances per million words)

The same phrase also featured in the Commons subset, albeit to a lesser extent: with only 403 occurrences, distributed as shown in Graph 10. This particular conventionalised phrase is interesting because of its absence in both subsets until the 1880s (in the Commons) and the 1890s (in the Lords). Both graphs also reveal that it was most frequent across the same three decades (i.e., the 1920s to the 1940s).



Graph 10: Frequency of *If I may respectfully say so* in the Commons (prioritised by instances per million words)

*If I may respectfully say so* was primarily used to mitigate any potential face threat: sometimes at a surface level only. In the Commons subset, it tended to be used alongside additional stance indicators, such as *I think* (x33), and/or conjunctions, such as *but* (x21). Consider:

- (14) I quite recognise the desirability of removing any misapprehension which may exist, but really, if I may respectfully say so, I think the misapprehension has arisen from the statements of those who ought to know better on this subject (S5CV0077P0\_01812, 23/12/1915)
- (15) There has been a very impassioned appeal to the House by the hon: Member, but really, if I may respectfully say so, his argument is entirely beside the point: What is the point? (S5CV0055P0\_05146, 18/7/1913)

Example (14) contains an evaluation of those giving (ill-conceived) statements, *who ought to know better*. (15) contains a proposition and a rhetorical question designed to ridicule the Member's *argument* (by suggesting that it lacks a premise). *But really* gives both utterances an additional layer of cynical incredulity.

In (16), we see the same incongruous pattern of targeted face threat varnished by a "ritualistic expression of respect for the targeted MP" (Ilie, 2004: 57). Hague had drawn attention to *the*

*Prime Minister wriggling off the point because he does not know the answer to the questions.* In response, Blair stated:

- (16) I think that the right hon. Gentleman's comments may look a little foolish when the results of the consolation are announced, if I may respectfully say so. As this is about the only health service subject that he dare raise – he knows that he has nothing to say about anything else (S6CV0363P0\_20010214, 14/02/2001)

Although the level of predicted foolishness is mitigated (via *a little*), Blair goes on to emphasise that Hague lacks the knowledge (as well as the skills base) to be an effective opposition Leader. This particular criticism echoed previous criticisms, moreover. In one 1999 debate, for example, Blair ridiculed Hague by stating:

- (17) It is not the hopeless misjudgments of the Leader of the Opposition over the Conservative party that should worry people; it is his misjudgment over Bank of England independence, scrapping the working families tax credit and the new deal, which has halved youth unemployment, and starting an illegal trade war with the rest of Europe that would have put thousands of jobs at risk: As Leader of the Opposition he may be a joke, but as Prime Minister he would be a disaster (S6CV0339P0\_19991124, 24/1/1999)

Blair was then parodied by Hague, in return:

- (18) At least my jokes are read out; the Prime Minister's jokes are all in the Cabinet (S6CV0339P0\_19991124, 24/1/1999)

Parody “manipulate[s] the effects of the context” in order to make the serious comical, according to Bakhtin (1981: 340). In this example, we have Blair repeating *misjudgments*, before crediting Hague with a list of poor choices, which are reputed to have adversely affected *thousands*. He then resorts to parallel structures, with the aim of adversely evaluating future Hague based upon his current under-performance (from Blair's perspective). Hague delivers a counter-insult, in turn. He echoes Blair's mention of *jokes*, but re-imagines the term's meaning such that it comes to denote Blair's Government Ministers. The overt nature of these face threats (and counter threats), in combination with criticisms echoing previous criticisms, indicate that face aggravation can be used systematically within this activity type, and to great effect.<sup>5</sup>

### 3.2 Modes of address

During debates in Parliament, MPs are expected to address each other by their position, rather than personal names, and in the third person (Chilton 2004: 105). Modes of address are preferred over personal names for two reasons. First, that “Members do not sit in the House as individual citizens” but, rather, “as representatives of their constituents; and it is in that capacity that they should [therefore] be addressed”; second, that it “guard[s] against all appearance of personality” in the House (House of Commons Report, 1998). The third person is preferred because Members are expected to direct their initial points to the Speaker (if in the Commons) and to the House as a whole (if in the Lords). Indeed, *you* (addressed to an individual) is meant to be reserved for the Speaker only.

Prior to the 1998 Report, relating to the Select Committee's *Modernisation of the House of Commons*, some modes of address were suitable for all MPs (e.g., *honourable Member for*,

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<sup>5</sup> This constitutes systematic face aggravation as opposed to systematic impoliteness (cf. Harris, 2001), as those involved were not deemed to have engaged in unparliamentary language use. That is to say, it was deemed appropriate behaviour, given the activity type (Levinson, 1992).

*Honourable Gentleman* and *Honourable Lady*). Others, however, were used when addressing specific people in the House. For example:

- *My honourable friend* was used to address members of the same party,
- *Honourable and Learned* was used to address practising lawyers,
- *Honourable and gallant* was used to address members connected with the Armed Forces,
- *Right honourable* was used to address a member of the Privy Council (whether a past or present minister).

Today's MPs are now instructed to use:

- *The honourable Member for* [Constituency] for a Member on the opposite benches,
- *My honourable friend* for a Member on their side of the House,
- *The honourable Member opposite* where the referent is clearly understood in context,
- *Right honourable* for Privy Counsellors (although distinguishing Privy Counsellors is contentious for some), and
- *The Minister* (or their office) for Ministers.

They are instructed, in turn, to refer to Peers using the formula *the noble Lord*, *Lord [X]* or its shorter form (*Lord [X]*). The practice of calling the House of Lords, itself, *the other place* or *another place* is now discouraged, however, because of being deemed confusing to the general public.

Peers have tended to refer to each other, historically, as *my Noble friend*, *the Noble Lord*, *the Noble and Gallant Lord*, or *the Noble and Learned Lord*. Some of these terms also point to usage differences between the two Houses. For example, the latter can be used in reference to a QC in the Commons, but is restricted to a former or current Law Lord in the House of Lords. As Table 3 reveals, Peers have used – or, at least, are reported by Hansard reporters to have used – other titles too (all of which also occur in the Commons, to a lesser or greater extent).

Table 3: Modes of Address in the Two Houses (and their frequencies)

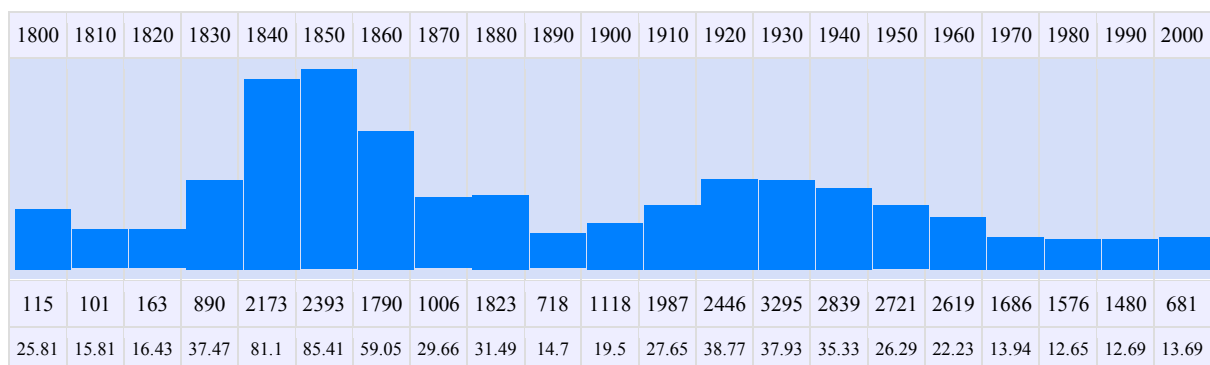
Formula	Occurrences in Lords	Instances per million words	Occurrences in Commons	Instances per million words	Total (both Houses)
Noble Lord	1,048,506	2469.2	211,639	167.57	1,260,145
Noble friend	463,350	1091.18	53,230	42.14	516,580
My noble friend	431,772	1016.82	33,620	26.62	465,392
Noble Lords	219,331	516.52	3,246	2.57	351,982
Noble and Learned *	196,946	463.8	2,762	2.19	199,708
Learned Friend	47,408	111.65	132,651	105.03	180,059
Gallant Friend	1,730	4.07	58,278	46.14	60,008
Right honourable friend	58,094	136.81	1,701	1.35	59,795
My right honourable friend	52,187	122.9	1,563	1.24	53,750
His noble Friend	27,891	65.68	16,459	13.03	44,350
Noble friends	25,492	60.03	722	0.57	26,214
Noble friend Lady *	24,425	57.52	137	0.11	26,214
My noble friend Lady *	24,038	56.61	106	0.08	24,562
My noble friends	22,112	52.07	351	0.28	22,423
Honourable gentleman	2,105	4.96	12,768	10.11	14,873
Right honourable gentleman	1,838	4.33	10,164	8.05	12,002
Honourable Member	1,896	4.47	9,399	7.44	12,403

Noble and Gallant * (Friend/Officer/Lord)	10,292	24.24	938	0.74	11,230
My honourable friend	7,061	16.63	2,979	2.36	10,040
Hon. Member	5	0.01	2,792	2.21	2,797
Learned friends	1,318	3.1	1,412	1.12	2,730
Right honourable friends	2,457	5.79	19	0.02	2,476
Honourable and Learned *	1,494	3.52	1,406	1.11	1,900
His noble Friends	1,746	4.11	153	0.12	1,899
My right honourable friends	1,768	4.16	12	0.01	1,780
My hon friend	2	0	1,527	1.21	1,529
Right hon friend	13	0.03	1,262	1.0	1,275
My learned Friend	627	1.48	586	0.46	1,213
My right hon friend	12	0.03	1,135	0.9	1,147
Honourable and Gallant *	58	0.14	875	0.69	933
My honourable friends	570	1.34	216	0.17	786
Gallant Friends	49	0.12	528	0.42	577
Honourable Lady	416	0.98	34	0.03	450
My hon friends	-	-	170	0.13	170
His hon friend	-	-	130	0.1	130
His hon friends	-	-	43	0.03	43
Right Honourable Lord	20	0.05	22	0.02	42
Right hon friends	1	0	39	0.03	40
Right Honourable Lord(ship)s	1	0	1	0	2

Parliamentary modes of address have been heavily regulated for some time, to the point of being corrected in the Hansard reports, when deemed to constitute an “obvious mistake” (Vice, p.c.). This underlines their importance as an explicit form of deference, that is, “regard... given unexceptionally as an automatic acknowledgement of relative social status” (Grundy, 2008: 207). These deferential modes of address seem to have been used in the same way as other expressive politeness features in the UK Parliamentary subsets, nonetheless: that is, to varnish what, in context, proved to be face-threatening acts.

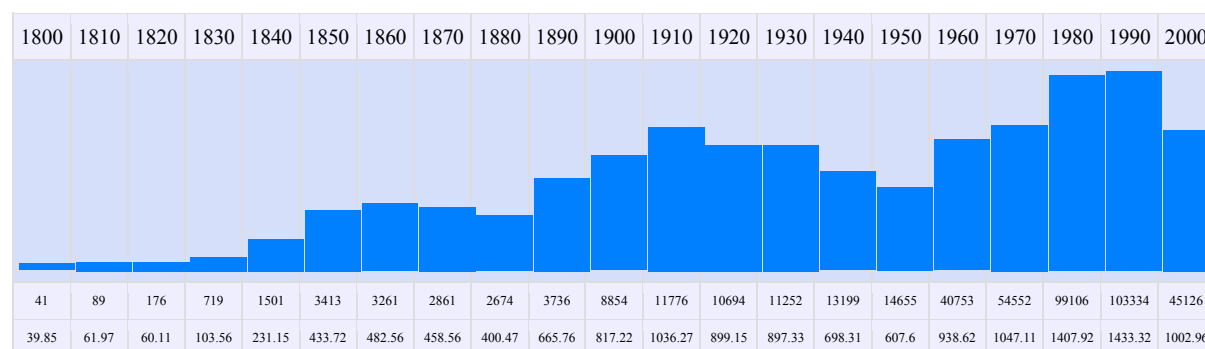
### 3.2.1 \*\* *Friend*

*Friend* occurs as part of a mode of address approximately 2.5 million times, across more than one million speeches. *Noble friend* is much more frequent in the Lords, but does occur in the Commons subset nonetheless. We might note here, however, that some of the instances may have been added, post-speech, by a Hansard reporter (having deemed a Member should have used it in a particular instance). Many instances of *noble friend* occur within the honorific *my noble friend* (see Table 3). Interestingly, there is a peak in usage in the 1840s and 1850s in the Commons subset, followed by a slight resurgence in use in the 1920s to 1940s (see Graph 11).



Graph 11: Frequency of *my noble friend* in the Commons (prioritised by instances per million words)

The peak in usage in the Lords subset occurs much later (in the 1980s and 1990s). It is particularly high in the 1990s: that is, at the point when *my noble friend* seems to have been used the most sparingly in the Commons (peaking at 103,334 instances per million words).



Graph 12: Frequency of *my noble friend* in the Lords (prioritised by instances per million words)

The frequent use of this particular honorific seems to have more to do with *my noble friend* being the preferred way for a Peer to address or refer to another member of their own party as opposed to the topic of any particular debate (cf. Section 3.1.1). For example, in addition to the first person, *noble friend* has a strong collocation with a specific (i.e., named) *Lord* or *Lady* (i.e., 144,304 and 21,004 instances respectively). It also collocates with the speech acts of *agreement* (11,140 instances), *thanking* (10,068 instances), *gratitude* (9,376 instances), and *congratulating* (2,531 instances) in the Lords subset. The prevalence of such speech acts points to a high incidence of face enhancement, when using this particular mode of address. It is worth remembering that *noble friend* could be used to varnish face-threatening acts in context nonetheless, as revealed by (1) and (3) (see Introduction).<sup>6</sup> Such usage is in line with the term being used by a Member (or the practice of being added later by a Hansard reporter) to signal an alliance with a Member from another party and/or to highlight their disagreement with a Member from their own party (Vice, p.c.).

In the Commons, *noble friend* collocates strongly with a specific *Lord*, *Earl*, *Viscount* or *Marquess* (i.e., 5,942, 469, 370 and 154 instances respectively) and a specific *Baroness* (447 instances). The phrase also collocates with different roles associated with *Secretary* and *Chancellor* (i.e., 2,496 and 1,001 instances respectively): for example, *Secretary of State for [X]*, *Lord Chancellor* and the *Chancellor of the Exchequer*. There is not the same association with face-enhancing speech acts in the Commons, as there is in the Lords, however. In fact, some occurrences were especially critical of others. In Example (19), a Commons MP (Mr Gerald Howarth) claims that, by voting against his *noble Friend's* amendment, the Bishops neglected their (religious) duty to the point of both confusing *Christians throughout Britain* and creating a crisis for the Church of England.

- (19) Unfortunately, or fortunately, I do not sit on the Bishops Benches, but I have written to the Archbishop of Canterbury asking him to explain to Christians throughout Britain how on earth the Church of England can send out such a confusing message: By their votes, the bishops ensured that my noble Friend's amendment was defeated, so they have some accounting to do for the way in which they voted: After all, they are members of the other place: That is why I asked the Archbishop of Canterbury why they voted as they did: The fact that the Bishops were not prepared to be as robust as their words would suggest that they intended to be, is a

<sup>6</sup> As noted in the Introduction, both contained implicit accusations relating to the interlocutors' inaccurate or misguided views on a particular issue.



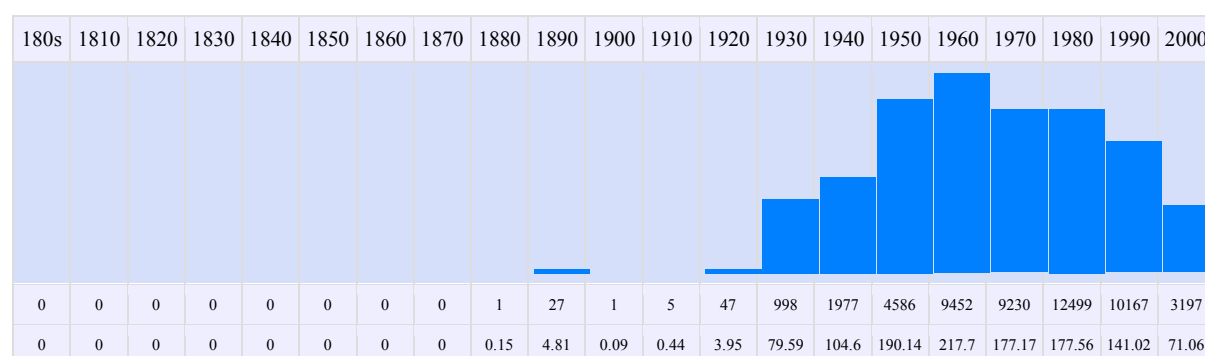
crisis for the Church of England, but I pay tribute to the Bishop of Winchester, who has been unambiguous on the matter throughout (S6CV0354P1\_04027, 25/7/2000).

Here, differences are accentuated, such that the Bishops are slighted/held accountable for their disinclination *to be as robust as their words*. In Example (20), Neil Kinnock also accentuates difference: on this occasion, to deflect criticism away from his beleaguered Labour government, albeit using the honorific, *my right honourable Friend*.

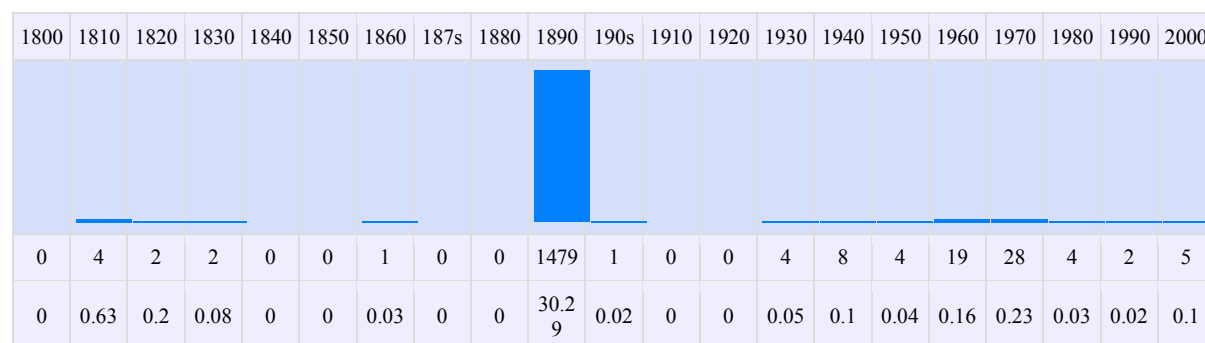
(20) In my right honourable Friend's reply to the right honourable Lady the Leader of the Opposition, was he not rather unsympathetic, especially now that she appears to be the last pro-Marketeer in Britain? Is not this disturbance manifested by her use of the word 'abrasiveness'? For the right honourable Lady to protest a dislike of abrasiveness is rather like Count Dracula professing a distaste for blood (S5CV0964P0\_02037, 15/3/1979)

The *right honourable friend*, in this case, was fellow Labour MP, William Molloy. Minutes earlier, Molloy had slighted Leader of the Opposition, Margaret Thatcher, by stating that, "If, by some tragedy, she came to power, recent industrial skirmishes would appear trivial". When Kinnock suggested that Molloy was *rather unsympathetic* toward Thatcher, he was "using superficial politeness as a potency-boosting prelude" to a second targeted attack (Archer 2017). Indeed, he went on to reanimate (so as to parody) Thatcher's protestation regarding *a dislike of abrasiveness* to that of a vampire *professing a distaste of blood*.

As Table 3 reveals, *my right honourable friend* accounts for nearly all of the occurrences of *right honourable friend* (i.e., 53,750 instances of 59,795 across the two Houses). It is distributed across the two Houses, as follows:



Graph 13: Frequency of *my right honourable friend* in the Lords (prioritised by instances per million words)



Graph 14: Frequency of *my right honourable friend* in the Commons (prioritised by instances per million words)

Although *right honourable friend* is much less frequent in the Commons subset (see Table 3), it similarly co-occurs with *the Member for [X]* and *the [X] Secretary*. A less frequent (but, nonetheless, statistically relevant) collocation in the Commons subset is that of *right*

*honourable friend* and *think*. *I think [that] my right honourable friend* occurs 33 times within the Commons subset. However, it seems to be primarily representative of the late nineteenth century (with 31 instances occurring in the 1890s).<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, there is a strong sense of negotiating difference(s) with respect to this particular collocation, albeit without engaging in explicit face aggravation (toward the *right honourable Friend*, at least).

(21) Now I think my right honourable Friend should not have omitted inquiry into this important branch of his great subject when he came to deal with the condition of Ireland (S3V0173P0\_01782, 5/2/1864)

(22) I think my right honourable Friend will find that with the varying circumstances and conditions of towns great diversity of opinion will arise (S4V0057P0\_02977, 11/5/1898)

(23) So, as far as I am concerned, it seems to me, without passing any very definite opinion on the subject, to be a convenience to the House to have some system by which loans of this sort may be consolidated in the same sense in which the local loans 10 years ago were consolidated: If there are no greater objections than those which have already been made in the short discussion we have had to-night, I certainly should not object to the proposal that has been introduced: I admit that I think my right honourable Friend might possibly be well advised if he were to make such an alteration as would permit him to place the proposals in a Bill by themselves, which might be brought in earlier than the Loans Bill, and give Parliament, perhaps, a more complete and fuller opportunity of expressing its opinion upon them than can be done at a time in the Session when a great many honourable Members have gone, and the House is not in a very good position for such discussions (S4V0062P0\_00492, 18/7/1898)

In Example (21), the MP concedes that his *right honourable Friend* omitted important factors from a debate (see *should not have*). Example (22) uses an *I think...find that* pattern as a prelude to a contradiction. Such a pattern can often carry the implication that the speaker considers the target to be injudicious. In Example (23), the MP makes known that he favours (or, at least, has no objections to) a proposal. However, his utterance contains a number of hedging strategies in addition to *I think (it seems to me, without passing any very definite opinion..., might possibly be..., if he were to..., perhaps)*. He uses the passive as a further distancing strategy, when discussing possible alterations to his *right honourable Friend's* proposal. He also mentions *honourable Members*, in order to suggest that their presence is adversely affecting the *opportunity* of engaging in fuller discussions at this time (and that *a more complete and fuller opportunity* could occur *when a great many* of them *have gone*). (23), in particular, could therefore be argued to be an example of strategically ambiguous facework (Archer 2015).

### 3.2.2 *Honourable member* \*

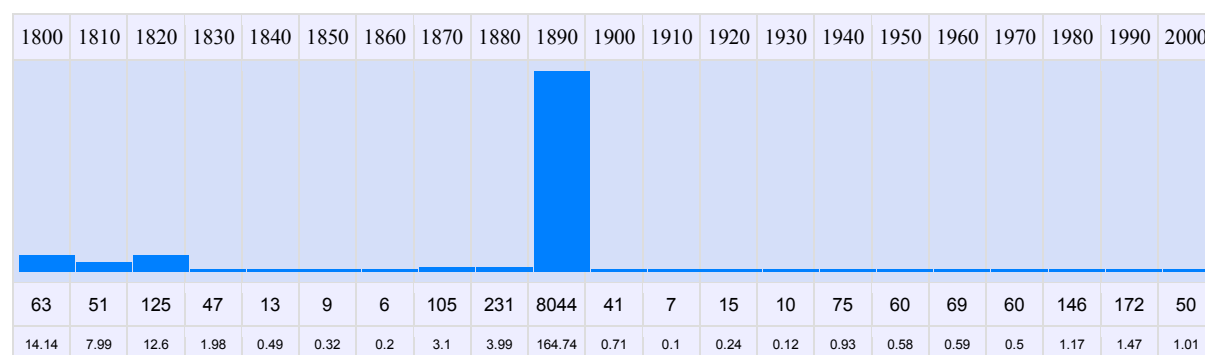
As noted in Section 3.2, *honourable member* \* is meant to be the preferred term for today's Opposition MPs. As we might expect, it is more frequent in the Commons than it is in the Lords overall, with 9,399 as opposed to 1,896 instances. This equates to instances per million words of 7.44 and 4.47 respectively.

If we explore the fluctuations in instances per million words across our 200-year period, we find some illuminating differences in respect to the two Houses. For example, there is a huge spike in terms of usage in the 1890s, in the Commons subset, with 164.74 instances per million words (see Graph 15). However, it appears to have been used relatively infrequently since then

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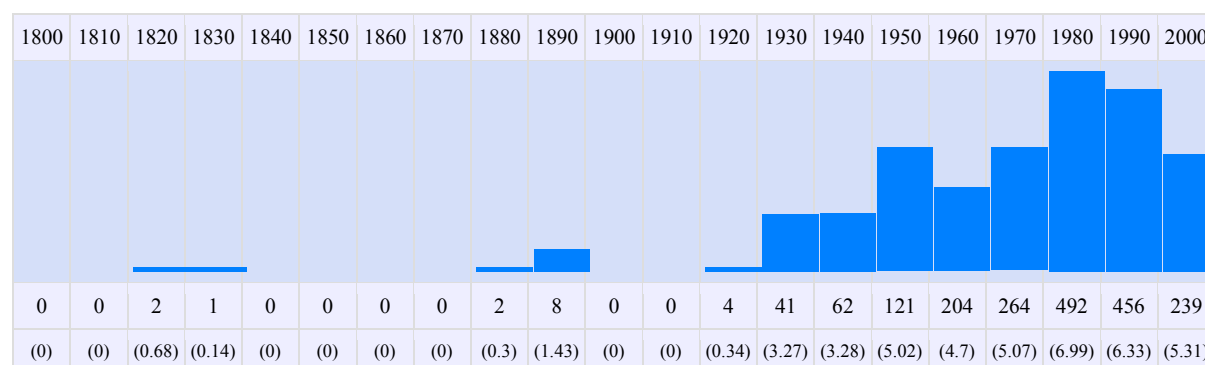
<sup>7</sup> This particular result may be explained by Hansard having a series of owners in the 1890s (Vice, p.c.).

(see footnote 7). Indeed, instances per million words have only moved between the range of 1.01 and 1.47 since the 1900s.



Graph 15: Instances (including per million words) of *honourable member* in the Commons

In contrast, this particular mode of address started to gain in frequency from the 1930s in the Lords subset, reaching a peak in usage in the 1980s and 1990s (with instances per million words of 6.99 and 6.33 respectively). It has remained relatively frequent in the twentieth century, too, with instances of 5.31 per million words.



Graph 16: Instances (including per million words) of *honourable member* in the Lords

*Desires* is a collocation of *honourable member* in the 1890s Commons subset. *Honourable member desires*, collocates, in turn, with *information*, *which* and *if*. Although there were few utterances involving these terms, when they did occur, MPs tended to be problematizing the giving of information (seemingly requested by another):

- (24) The information which the honourable Member desires could only be obtained by requiring a Return from every prison; and I think the results would not justify the trouble that its collection would involve (S4V0056P0\_03377, 29/4/1898)
- (25) The information which the honourable Member desires to obtain is not in the possession of Her Majesty's Government, but if he attaches importance to it, Her Majesty's Ambassador at St. Petersburg will be asked whether any documents giving the particulars are available to the public (24V0068P0\_00590, 9/3/1899)
- (26) The information which the honourable Member desires is too complicated to be given in an answer to a Question: I shall be glad, however, to consider the possibility of giving a Return which will cover the points that he has raised, and perhaps the honourable Member will communicate with me on the subject (S4V0069P0\_00658, 24/3/1899)

In Example (24), the MP initially emphasizes the difficulty in obtaining the desired information, and then offers his opinion that the effort expended to achieve it would be too great, given the (projected) results. This attempt to persuade others not to pursue the information is missing from (25). However, the MP's *if*-clause puts the onus on the *honourable*

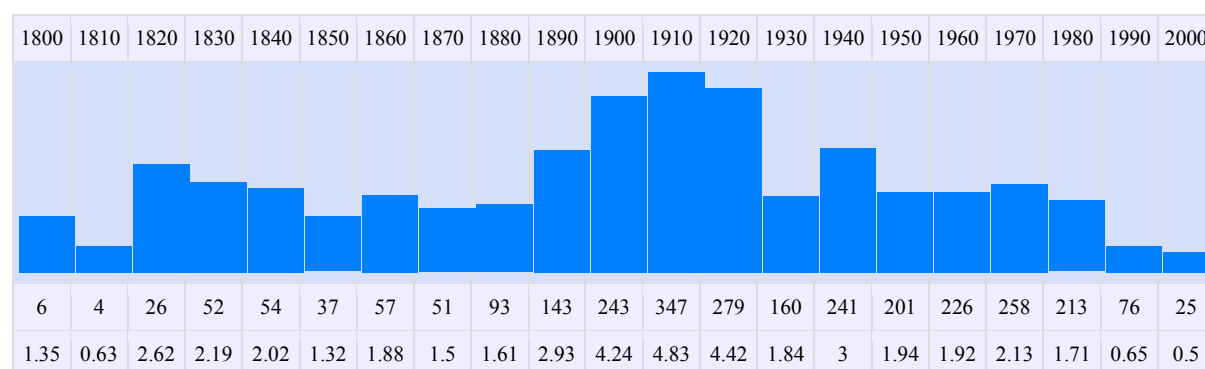
*Member* to determine its importance. Notice, in addition, that, were the *honourable Member* to attach enough importance such that a request to *Her Majesty's Ambassador* was made, the MP has allowed for the possibility that *any documents giving the particulars* may not necessarily be *available to the public*. The MP in (26) signals a greater level of amenableness to a request, but only on the understanding that any discussions are undertaken at an unspecified time in the future (to be instigated by the *honourable Member*).

*Another place* (referring to the Commons) was one of the strongest collocates of *honourable member* in the Lords subset in the 1980s. In these cases, the Peer was normally quoting or summarising the words of an MP. This quoting and summarising did not have a noticeable face-enhancement or face-aggravating aim, in the main. This said, there was the occasional example, like the following, where a Peer apologised for quoting another:

(27) I may at this stage make a brief apology: During the course of our earlier discussions on this topic I quoted an **honourable Member** in another place: I have now been advised that I should not have done that and I apologise to the Committee and to the honourable Member concerned (S5LV0494P0\_04594, 14/03/1988).

*Honourable member* also co-occurred with *congratulate* on a few occasions. Peers congratulated honourable members (from the *other place*) for their *special efforts*, for their *skill and tenacity* and for their *achievement*, etc., thereby engaging in overt face enhancement.

This particular honorific is also written in an abbreviated form in the Hansard records: *hon Member*. As Table 3 reveals, there are only five instances in the Lords subsets, compared with 2,792 instances in the Commons subset. Its instance per million words in the latter is between 0.5 and 4.83 for our 200-year period, with the peak in usage occurring in the 1910s.



Graph 17: Instances (including per million words) of *hon. member* in the Lords

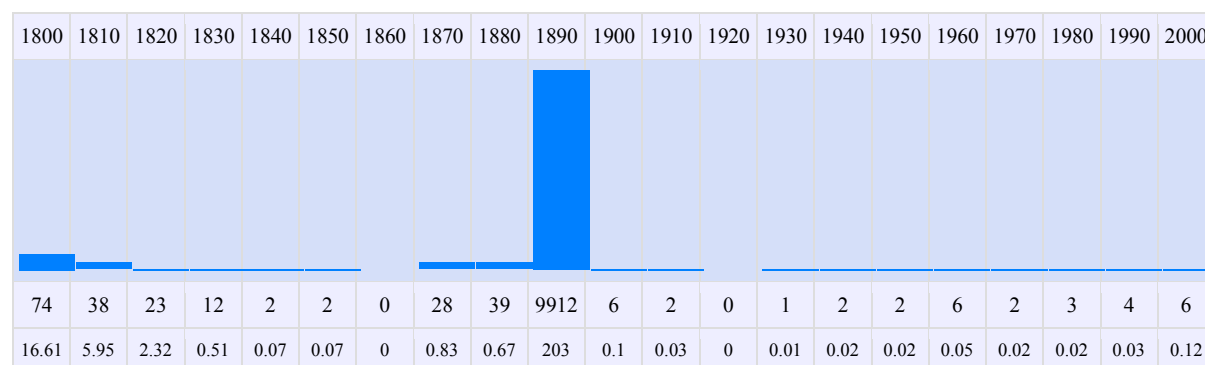
Some examples using this mode of address are especially overt in their face attack. One MP (Mr Harold Davies) said of another: ‘The hon. Member is a moron’ (S5CV0623P0, 16/5/1960), for example. In this instance, Davies was upbraided for his unparliamentary language use. Other more indirect face attacks passed without comment, however:

(28) When the hon: Member wants to throw cold water upon the stories of atrocities in Belgium, why he should always drag in his sneers about the Belgian atrocities in the Congo I leave it for the House and country to judge... (S5CV0068P0\_01653, 16/11/1914)

In Example (28), the MP seemed to deliberately frame the *hon: Member* “as someone who knowingly *sneered* at a time when people were unjustly suffering (Archer and Malory, 2017: 37). The suggestion that he *always drag[ged] in his sneers* suggests, moreover, that this behaviour was characteristic when it came to the Belgians’ treatment of *the Congo*. Here, then, there is a clear link between facework and impression management (see Archer 2017).

### 3.2.3 Gentleman/Lord/Lady

The honorific, *right honourable gentleman*, accounts for 12,002 of the 14,873 occurrences of *honourable gentleman* across the two subsets. Both terms are much more frequent in the Commons subset, with 10,164 and 12,768 occurrences respectively (see Table 3). Graph 18 shows the distribution of *right honourable gentleman* in the Commons subset across the 200-year period, and once again reveals a marked peak in usage in the 1890s.



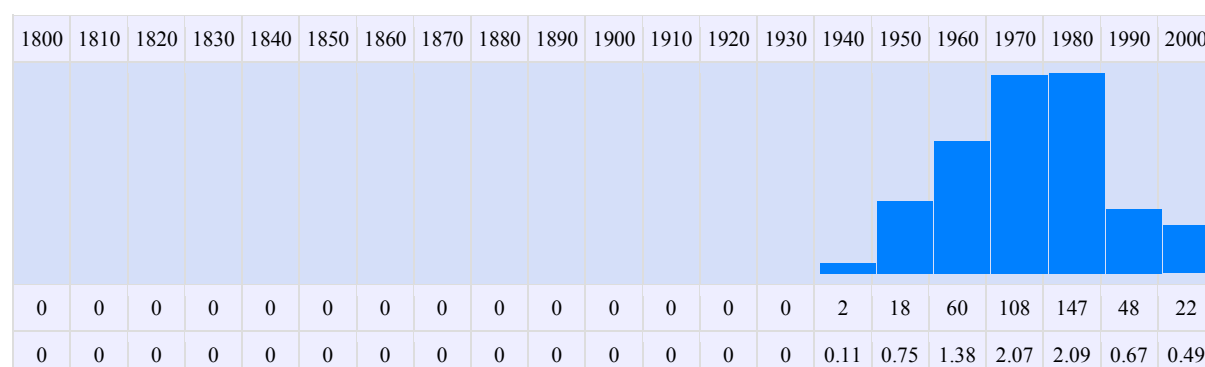
Graph 18: Instances (including per million words) of *right honourable gentleman* in the Commons

Phrases which collocate with *right honourable gentleman* in the 1890s include *I [\*] hope the, I [would/wish to/must/venture/should like to] ask the, I [do not] think and appeal to*. Many of the latter constitute direct appeals, as in Examples (29) and (30).

- (29) I do appeal to the right honourable Gentleman opposite, on behalf of the poor people of Ireland, if they desire to see the poor districts developed, that they will reconsider the matter: It is not a Party matter; there is no Party question involved in it; and it is a matter in which we are all deeply concerned: This is a question for enabling something to be done by the county councils for the poor occupiers in Ireland (S4V0057P0\_01040, 5/4/1898).
- (30) As practical men, the members of the executive committee know something about this matter, and I venture to say that they are as capable of appreciating whether these new regulations are or are not desirable as are the Board of Agriculture: I venture to appeal to the right honourable Gentleman as a practical man himself, and one who thoroughly understands the interests of agriculturists, to consider this matter: As an agriculturist myself, I feel that in anything affecting the interests of farmers we have a very good friend in the right honourable Gentleman, and I can assure him that in bringing forward this question I have no desire to attack him, because that is the last thing in the world I would wish to do (S4V0064P0\_01722, 8/8/1898).

Example (29) makes an emotive appeal, with the aim of persuading *the right honourable Gentleman opposite to reconsider a matter*. The adjective, *poor*, is drawn upon three times: when referring to the *people of Ireland*, *occupiers in Ireland*, and the *districts* within. The MP also makes use of a recurring structure based on contrasts: *It is not a Party matter...it is a matter in which; There is no Party question .... This is a question for*. Example (30) has a similar aim, but the MP engages in more explicit face enhancement in this instance. He engages in positive politeness (Brown and Levinson, 1987) when he explicitly identifies people – including *the right honourable Gentleman* – who are capable of appreciating/understanding the nuances of the debate. He also makes explicit that his *question* should not be interpreted as an attack. In so doing he draws upon both negative politeness (by implicitly signalling his recognition that it constitutes an imposition) and positive politeness (by explaining he values him too highly *to attack him*).

*Honourable Lady* is very infrequent, compared to many of the other honorifics, with only 26 matches in the Commons subset, and 405 matches in the Lords subset. In the Commons, the term is used most in the 1970s and 1990s (with eight utterances each). In the Lords, usage peaks in the 1970s and 1980s, before dropping off sharply. The timing of these usages in the Lords (see Graph 19) and Commons may thus point, in part, to Mrs Thatcher’s presence in (and effect on) Parliament.



Graph 19: Instances (including per million words) of *honourable lady* in the Lords

As Examples (31) and (32) reveal, *right honourable lady* was sometimes used to varnish face threat via a “ritualistic expression of respect for the targeted MP” (Ilie, 2004: 57). In Example 31, Baroness Gaitskell nullifies her face enhancement of *the right honourable lady’s ability* with her condemnation of Thatcher’s *refusal* to accept the *paramount need...to educate...children*:

- (31) My Lords, would it not be true to say that the right honourable lady, Mrs: Thatcher, despite all her ability, has not accepted the paramount need to-day to educate most of our children and not just some of them, and that this latest refusal to accept the Birmingham proposals is another proof of what she feels about these things? (S5LV0405P0\_00601, 13/2/1980)

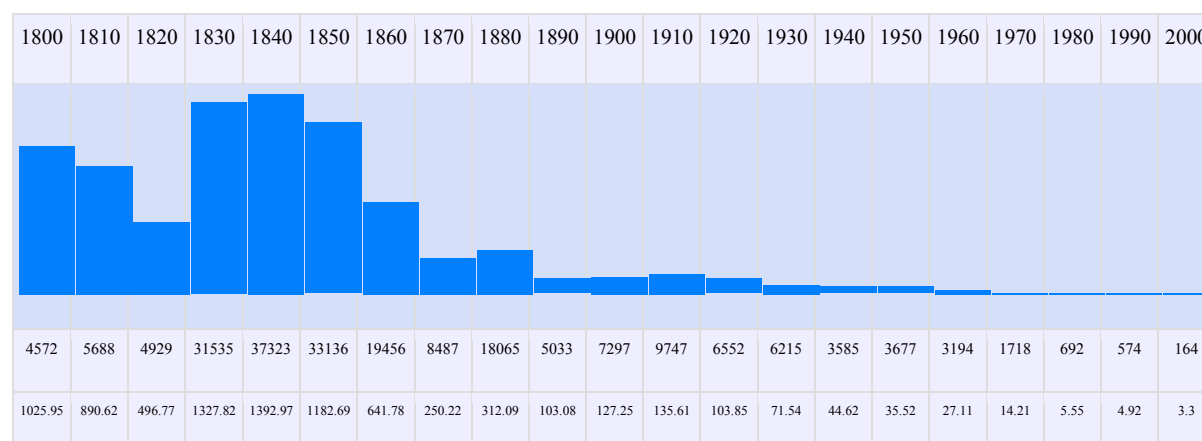
Notice how much is being presupposed because of the use of a questioning structure here. This is in line with Ilie’s (2006: 189) observation that “parliamentary questioning strategies are not intended to elicit particular answers, but rather to embarrass and/or to challenge the respondent to make uncomfortable or revealing declarations”. Example (32) makes use of the conjunction *but* to contrast (and arguably nullify) the positive politeness of *I have every respect for her* with the negative politeness slight, *she is like an ornamental catalpa tree...trumpeting away, fanatically*.

- (32) The other night I listened to the right honourable lady: I have every respect for her but she is like an ornamental catalpa tree, sitting there, trumpeting away, fanatically: I do not think she will last as the leader of the party opposite if they are going to carry on this policy, because the country will be in such a state that no longer will there be anything else that they can sell off (S5LV0416P0\_05307, 2/4/1981).

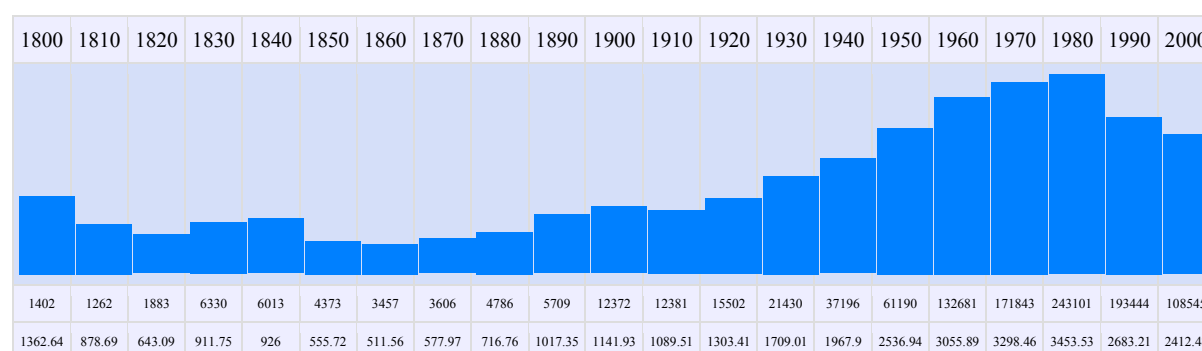
*The right honourable lady’s sustainability as leader of the party opposite* is then questioned, as part of an if-structure that also negatively depicts the opposition party’s policy of *selling off* the country’s assets (to its detriment).

As highlighted in Section 3.2, Today’s MPs are instructed to refer to Peers using the formula *the noble Lord*, *Lord [X]* or its shorter form (*Lord [X]*). Peers also use these phrases to one another, albeit the latter form is restricted to (a) deceased Peers, or (b) Peers not entitled to sit in the Lords (Vice, p.c.). Honorifics such as *noble Lord* are thus very frequent. Indeed, there

are more than 1.2 million occurrences of *noble Lord*, distributed across the 200-year period as follows:



Graph 20: Instances (including per million words) of *noble Lord* in the Commons



Graph 21: Instances (including per million words) of *noble Lord* in the Lords

This particular honorific has dramatically declined in use over time in the Commons subset, but has grown in frequency in the Lords (peaking at 3298.46 utterances per million words in the 1980s). Examples (33) and (34) were uttered by the same Peer, Lord Parry, during a 1997 debate:

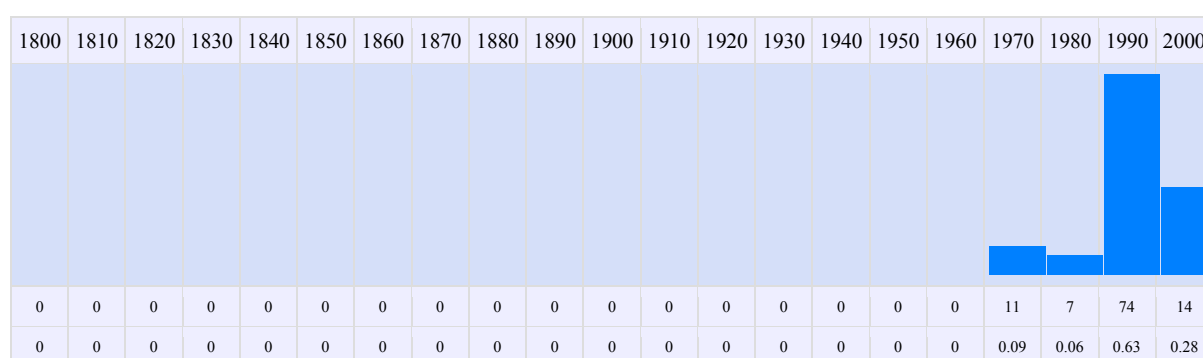
- (33) At that time, education in Britain was a patchwork. The type of education that you received depended on where you lived. It was a patchwork because not enough public money was devoted to it. In fact, only in certain areas were sufficient sums of money available to provide a decent education for those who could not afford to pay for it themselves. That is an issue that has been stated time and again. In this country there are a great many such people. The right reverend Prelate is not in his seat, so I cannot refer to what he said, but he was wrong. The noble Lord, Lord Skidelsky, has put on this education debate an influence which is all his own. It ignores the fact that there are still thousands of families in this country who, even when they want to do so, cannot afford to educate their children. The system has to be rearranged and has to provide for those people (S5LV0580P0\_03590, 24/6/1997)
- (34) I was astonished to hear the noble Lord, Lord Henley--again not in his place--make the charge that this was a mean-spirited Bill and that it represented only broken promises to the 11 year-olds (S5LV0580P0\_03590, 24/6/1997)

These are two of several examples discussed in this paper, where we see parliamentarians engaging in discourse that, to quote Ilie (2006: 188), calls “into question the opponents’ ethos, i.e., political credibility and moral profile, while enhancing their own *ethos*” via “*logos*, i.e. logical reasoning, and *pathos*, i.e. emotion eliciting force”. In (33), the Peer establishes what

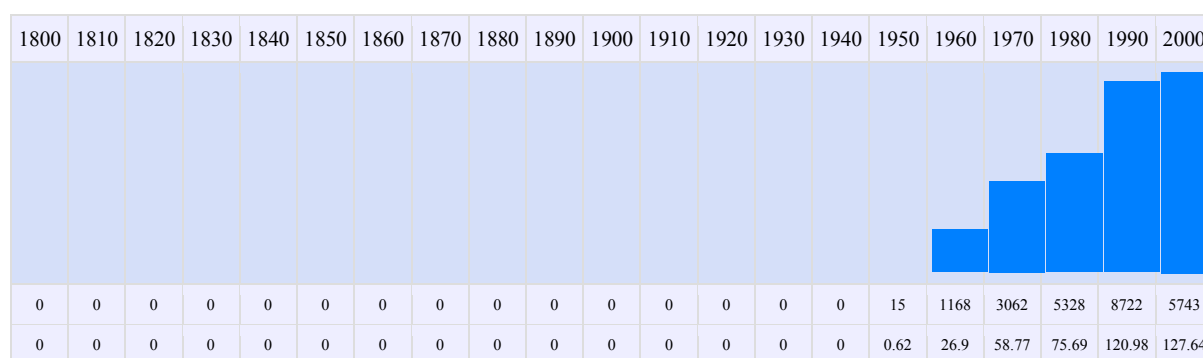


*education in Britain* was prior to engaging in face threatening behaviour. This provides a means of justifying why the *right reverend Prelate* and the *noble Lord, Lord Skidelsky* are wrong. As the Peer himself notes, because the former *is not in his seat*, he *cannot refer to what he said* directly. He does not explain what *Lord Skidelsky* said either but, instead, accuses him of ignoring facts. In (34), the Peer comments upon another *noble Lord* who is *not in his place*. In this instance, however, we learn more about his *charge*, as it authenticates the Peer’s astonishment.

Honorifics using *Lady* include (*my*) *noble friend Lady* [X] and *honourable Lady*. As Table 3 reveals, both referents are more frequent in the Lords than they are the Commons. *My noble friend Lady* [X] accounts for 24,038 of the 24,425 occurrences of *noble friend Lady* [X] in the Lords subset, and 106 of the 137 occurrences in the Commons subset. Most of these occurred from the 1970s onwards in the former (see Graph 22) and from the 1960s in the latter (see Graph 23).



Graph 22: Instances (including per million words) of *my noble friend Lady* [X] in the Commons



Graph 23: Instances (including per million words) of *my noble friend Lady* [X] in the Lords

The notable spike in usage from the 1990s, in both Houses, can be explained, in part, by Blair’s appointment of a “strongly-female Front Bench” in 1997 (Vice, p.c.). Example (35) relates to speech given by Lord Parry in 1997 (in the same debate over education, as above).

- (35) In my 32 years as a teacher, in the 20 years that my daughter has been teaching and in the time that my wife was ancillary to the teaching service, we have indeed been into the classrooms and seen the children: We know the advantages and the disadvantages that accrue to so many children in our classrooms in Britain today: I congratulate my noble friend Lady Blackstone both on her elevation to the Front Bench and on the precise and concise way in which she presented the Bill: Many of the misunderstandings which are alleged to have arisen and many of the challenges that have been made to the Bill ignore the very points that my noble friend systematically made in her presentation (S5LV0580P0\_03590, 24/6/1997)



In (33) and (34), the Peer was critical of others for not fully appreciating and even twisting the debate. In (35), the Peer engaged in both face enhancement and face threat (Archer, 2015) via his position-claiming and opponent-challenging acts. Specifically, he established the teaching credentials of his own family as a prelude both to (i) *congratulating* his *noble friend Lady Blackstone* for her *concise* and *systematic* presentation of the Bill and (ii) attacking the ignorance of those against the Bill.

#### 4 Concluding comments

This paper contributes to the limited research on parliamentary discourse using corpus linguistic techniques (Bara et al. 2007; Cucchi, 2007) as well as the growing body of research on the (im)politeness of parliamentary discourse (Harris 2001; Pérez de Ayala 2001; Ilie 2004; Archer and Malory 2017; Archer 2017). Like Archer and Malory (2017) and Archer (2017), I have explored the discourse of parliamentary debates over time: in my case, with the aim of documenting the extent to which - as well as the different ways in which - MPs and Peers used ritualistic modes of address, and other deferential terms, to negotiate their differences. My findings reveal that MPs and Peers have been using ritualised interaction strategies, as a means of complying with the constraints of (some level of) parliamentary protocol, for some time or have had those ritualised practices imposed upon them by the Hansard reporters, post speech. This appears to contradict Norton's (1997: 15) claim that the atmosphere of the House of Commons, especially, "resembled a London club" in the nineteenth century. What the Hansard transcripts do not capture, of course, is "the cut-and-thrust" style of debating then (and now), that is, the MPs' "interventions, expressions of approval and disapproval and, sometimes, of repartee and banter" (see <http://www.parliament.uk>). As many of my examples reveal, MPs and Peers have also found ways of circumventing some of the parliamentary constraints, without necessarily contravening the guidelines on parliamentary language use. The distribution figures highlighted in this paper suggest that Peers may have been (and still may be) more polite than MPs in some ways. Parliamentarians from both Houses nonetheless exhibite(d) "position-claiming, persuading ... and opinion building" (Ilie 2006: 192) tactics when negotiating their differences, and in ways that were face-damaging. MPs and Peers have been known to characterise interlocutors and/or the parties they represent(ed) as having inaccurate or misguided views on issues, for example, and drawn upon (dialogic) techniques, such as assimilation, (re)accentuation, repetition, recontextualisation and parody, when doing so. We can therefore conclude that, although expressive politeness features can point to the use of face enhancement in the UK Parliament, past and present, they may have been varnishing face threatening acts in practice (cf. Johnson and Clifford, 2011). This should not be too surprising, given that ways of addressing interlocutors in Parliament are institutionally sanctioned and deliberately ritualistic. But it does not mean that parliamentary debates up until the turn of the twentieth century were therefore characterised by systematic impoliteness (cf. Harris 2001), albeit veiled within a semblance of linguistic "politeness" markers. For, even though there was evidence of institutional and interpersonal adversariality (Ilie 2003: 73), in the form of accusations and criticisms, in both Houses across the decades, parliamentarians mostly managed to negotiate their "evaluations of facts, events, people, etc." (Ilie 2003: 74) without falling into the types of abrasiveness that Erskine May so famously abhorred. As noted in Footnote 3, parliamentary practice has recently been amended, such that a word can only be deemed to be *unparliamentary* now if it is deemed to have been used "abusive[ly] and

insulting[ly]” in context by the Speaker (Jack et al. 2011: 445): that is to say, there is no list of forbidden terms. Further research might determine whether this change, dating from 2011, is a significant one, such that the UK Parliament is now a more (or less) face threatening place in consequence. That research might also seek to determine the extent to which changes made by Hansard recorders, post speech, affect our interpretations of (im)politeness levels, by comparing the video recordings of the parliamentary proceedings that have been deposited in the UK’s National Film Archive with their official Hansard reports.

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